

Step up disaster preparedness measures

Oxfam urges three South Asian govts

Oxfam, an international humanitarian agency, yesterday urged the governments of India, Bangladesh and Nepal to step up preparedness measures for the annual floods in the Ganga-Brahmaputra river basin and issued an appeal in the UK to raise funds for its own response to the flood-affected people in the region.

Oxfam will be responding to up to half a million people in the three countries. Altogether 20 million people in India, Bangladesh and Nepal have been affected by flooding in the current monsoon, forcing many from their homes.

"The magnitude of these floods shows how important it is for governments and the international community to be prepared for when disasters strike," said Ashvin Dayal, head of Oxfam in South Asia.

Oxfam's £1 million appeal for its work will be spent on delivering food, emergency shelter, hygiene items and clean water and safe sanitation in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, the release added.

Int'l Day of World's Indigenous People today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nation observes International Day of the World's Indigenous People today while their lands are still being grabbed, their culture denigrated, languages and customs suppressed, wisdom and traditional knowledge exploited.

This year, the theme of the Day is 'Honouring Indigenous Youth, Languages and Sacred Sites'.

Different organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the Day with a pledge to ensure human rights of the country's 41 indigenous communities.

Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum has taken a daylong programme to mark the occasion. The programme includes a rally from Ramna at 10:00am, and a discussion, exhibition and cultural show in the evening. Eminent economist Prof Rehman Sobhan will inaugurate the programme at 10:00am.

Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre (BDPC) will hold a discussion at its central office in the city at 4:00pm to mark of the Day.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at a message said that today is a time to remember those indigenous peoples who continue to suffer discrimination, marginalisation, extreme poverty and conflict.

They also face dispossession of

their traditional lands and livelihoods, displacement, destruction of their belief systems, culture, language and way of life—and even the threat of extinction, he added.

Meanwhile, European Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner yesterday wished to pay tribute to the enormous diversity and cultural wealth of indigenous peoples in all parts of the world.

In her message, Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner reaffirms the European Commission's unwavering commitment to support indigenous people all over the world.

She also said that European Commission co-funds two smaller projects of Caritas Bangladesh aimed at supporting integration and skill development of indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and along the

coastal belt.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haq Inu and General Secretary Syed Jafar Sazzad yesterday demanded constitutional recognition of the indigenous people, which has not been implemented although it has been 36 years since our independence.